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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KCRM](#) [GY](#)
SUBJECT: SECURITY FEARS MAR RUN-UP TO GUYANA ELECTIONS

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 787

[1](#)B. GEORGETOWN 406
[1](#)C. GEORGETOWN 372
[1](#)D. GEORGETOWN 815
[1](#)E. GEORGETOWN 205

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael D. Thomas
For reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. One week after the August 8 execution-style killing of five Kaieteur News printery employees (ref A), we take stock of the consequences for Guyana and the August 28 elections. Uncertainty remains over the gunmen's motive, but the front-running theory of conspiracy-minded Guyanese is that they are carrying out an orchestrated terror campaign under direction from some element associated with the opposition PNC/R. The GoG certainly takes this view -- which naturally makes us circumspect -- but it is still conjecture without evidence. Regardless, the spate of criminal violence has affected the election climate, but if the criminals' intent is to hijack the election process, they have not yet succeeded. Guyana remains on track to go to the polls in twelve days. END SUMMARY.

August 10: Claim that Roger Khan had Hand in Killings

[1](#)2. (S) Charge spoke by phone August 10 with Peter Ramsaroop (a prominent Guyanese-American businessman and aspiring politician), who described a long conversation he had August 3 with Kaieteur News publisher Glenn Lall. According to Ramsaroop, Lall confided that narco-criminal Shaheed "Roger" Khan (currently incarcerated in New York awaiting trial) is blackmailing those whom he helped protect during the 2002-2004 crime spree. Khan may need funds to pay his legal bills or to finance his vulnerable drug trafficking operation. Ramsaroop told Charge that Lall refused these demands and as a result was fearful of becoming a target. In this scenario, gunmen controlled by Khan's organization killed the Kaieteur News employees to send a clear message to others who do not want to pay up.

August 11: Home Affairs Minister Convinced of PNC Plot

[1](#)3. (S) Minister of Home Affairs Gail Teixeira met with Charge

and UK and Canada Chiefs of Mission August 11 to discuss Guyana's deteriorating security situation in the run-up to the August 28 general election. Teixeira outlined the GoG's interpretation of the killings and recent turmoil -- they are part of a centrally orchestrated terror campaign by the PNC/R's security committee. She alluded to information that suggests the perpetrators' motive is to make people afraid to participate in the election and/or provoke a constitutional crisis by forcing an election postponement past the September 2 deadline. She is convinced that leader of the PNC Robert Corbin at least concurred with the attacks.

14. (S) Teixeira lamented that the joint services -- the Guyana Police Force (GPF) and the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) -- are reluctant to see a political hand in the violence, although that opinion is now changing. Teixeira said that armed Afro-Guyanese gang members (commonly referred to as the "Buxton resistance") are essentially available for hire and are trying to embed themselves in new places now that the joint services have cracked down on their traditional refuge in Buxton.

August 13: Kaieteur News Publisher also sees Political Hand

15. (C) PolOff met August 13 with Glenn Lall to discuss the killings. He believes the attack was politically motivated -- although not necessarily directed by Corbin himself. Lall's paper is not especially pro-government (he professes to support the upstart Alliance For Change). Instead, Lall thinks that the gang targeted Kaieteur because it is such a public and high-profile institution, although he also intimated that the attackers may have expected to find weapons at the printery. (Note: The Kaieteur News is said to have the highest circulation of Guyana's three dailies; it offsets its tabloid style and lurid crime coverage with a vibrant, serious op-ed section.) Lall also insisted that he knows some of the gang members, who were as young as twelve.

16. (C) The paper has been targeted in the past. Lall described a grenade attack a few years ago when his printery set on fire -- apparently the work of drug kingpin Brahmanand Nandalall's men who objected to the Kaieteur News' coverage of Nandalall's kidnapping. Lall himself has an interesting past, with possible connection to alien smuggling.

17. (C) Lall acknowledged rumors that he had hired ex-members of Roger Khan's so-called Phantom Squad -- connected to former Home Affairs Minister Ronald Gajraj -- that carried out extra-judicial killings in 2002-2003. He dismissed the rumors, but admitted that he does employ off-duty officers from the President's and Prime Minister's details as security for his office and his wife's shoe business.

18. (C) Lall said he does not think Khan is still pulling the strings of his criminal organization now that he is in New York awaiting trial. Lall said two or three people are taking it over.

Connection between Kaieteur and Minister Sawh Killings

19. (C) Both Teixeira and Lall said that some of those who killed the Kaieteur News employees are also responsible for assassinating Agriculture Minister Sawh in April 2006 (refs B and C). These attacks bore similarities in terms of tactics and dress. One of these joint suspects, Jermaine "Skinny" Charles, was taken into GPF custody Saturday morning, August 12. It is unclear whether the GPF found him or Lall's privately hired "security" men did and then handed him over.

Prison Unrest and Bank Robberies Add to Malaise

110. (C) Inmates in Guyana's main Camp Street prison, located

in central Georgetown, have created disturbances three times between August 8 and August 14. Teixeira said that she had a week's advanced notice that something would happen at Camp Street, but the prison service underestimated the threat. Although the disturbances were ostensibly over poor prison conditions, Post believes rumors that they were coordinated with attacks on the outside are credible. Guards shot and injured two prisoners who were trying to escape August 13. This is an especially raw issue for Guyanese because of the 2002 prison break-out that led to a widespread crime spree.

¶11. (U) Bandits carried out a series of bank robberies August 11 in Rose Hall, Berbice (about 10 miles east of New Amsterdam), injuring one. The GoG believes these criminals are in league with the "Buxton resistance" and those who committed the attack on Kaieteur. Since the bank heists, a joint services manhunt has killed three suspected robbers and recovered three AK-47s identified as part of the thirty stolen from the GDF storehouse in February 2006 (refs D and E).

Comment

¶12. (C) Guyana is prone to grand conspiracy theories -- so it does not surprise us that the GoG and Lall are connecting the dots between the PNC/R leadership and the Kaieteur killings, prison unrest, Berbice bank robberies, and other major crimes in 2006. While PNC/R leader Corbin is morally capable of such machinations, we do not yet see a direct link. However, we do agree that gang members connected with extreme elements of the PNC/R are pursuing a vague political agenda. If that is the plan, it is working only in part. Yes, the public is scared and many middle and upper-class Guyanese are leaving the country for the election period (and thus will not be able to vote). But the criminals have not yet provoked an election delay and constitutional crisis. The PPP government spin machine has even turned the August 8 attacks into a positive campaign issue. Two days later, the GoG wheeled out Jagdeo and Bernard Kerik (CEO of the Kerik Group, disgraced former New York Police Commissioner and failed nominee to head DHS) agreeing to a deal to assist in the IDB-funded US\$20 million GPF restructuring. END COMMENT.

Thomas